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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
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AMIN & TUROCY, LLP
24TH FLOOR, NATIONAL CITY CENTER
1900 EAST NINTH STREET
CLEVELAND, OH 44114

EXAMINER

TANG, KENNETH

ART UNIT PAPER NUMBER

2127

DATE MAILED: 08/13/2004

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

Office Action Summary

Application No.

09/346,194

Applicant(s)

SINGH ET AL.

Examiner

Kenneth Tang

Art Unit

2127

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --
Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If the period for reply specified above is less than thirty (30) days, a reply within the statutory minimum of thirty (30) days will be considered timely.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on 15 April 2004.
- 2a) ☒ This action is **FINAL**. 2b) ☐ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 2-17, 19-26 and 28-39 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) _____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 2-17, 19-26 and 28-39 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☐ The drawing(s) filed on _____ is/are: a) ☐ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.
Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
- 11) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

- 12) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) ☐ All b) ☐ Some * c) ☐ None of:
1. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
2. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
3. ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).
- * See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

- 1) ☒ Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)
- 2) ☐ Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)
- 3) ☐ Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-1449 or PTO/SB/08)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date _____
- 4) ☐ Interview Summary (PTO-413)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date _____
- 5) ☐ Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152)
- 6) ☐ Other: _____

DETAILED ACTION

1. This action is in response to the Amendment on 4/15/04. Applicants arguments regarding claims 2, 17 and 23 have been fully considered but they are not deemed to be persuasive.

Arguments regarding claims 4, 11, and 29 have been fully considered but are now moot in view of the new grounds of rejections.

2. It is noted that claims 1, 18, and 27 have been cancelled. Claims 2-17, 19-26, and 28-39 are presented for examination.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 112

The following is a quotation of the second paragraph of 35 U.S.C. 112:

The specification shall conclude with one or more claims particularly pointing out and distinctly claiming the subject matter which the applicant regards as his invention.

3. Claims 30-39 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which applicant regards as the invention. In claim 30, the term "workflow extended store coupled to the workflow enabled data table" is indefinite because it is not understood if the workflow extended store is coupled to the workflow enabled data table or if instead, it should be the workflow extended store is coupled to the workflow triggers of the workflow enabled data table.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

4. Claim 2-3 and 23-26, and 28 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Okita et al. (hereinafter Okita) (US 6,225,998 B1) in view of Bacon et al. (hereinafter Bacon) (US 6,430,538 B1).

5. As to claim 2, Okita teaches a computer-readable medium having computer-executable instructions to cause a computing system to perform a method comprising (*col. 4, lines 16-25*):

- creating a data table in a server database (*col. 4, lines 64-67 through col. 5, lines 1-8, Col 4, lines 54-64, and col. 5, lines 27-41*);
- creating a workflow table in the server database, wherein the workflow table is associated with the data table, wherein each row in the workflow table represents a workflow step containing workflow rules and associated code defined by script functions (*col. 4, lines 64-67 through col. 5, lines 1-8, and Col 4, lines 54-64, and col. 12, lines 12-23*);
- a data modification request in the server database (*Figure 2 and col. 5, lines 27-41, and col. 4, lines 64-67 through col. 5, lines 1-8*);
- invoking a workflow engine using server database triggers (*Col 4, lines 54-64, col. 12, lines 12-23, and Figure 2 and col. 5, lines 27-41*);
- evaluating a condition and executing an action for at least one workflow step (*Col 4, lines 54-64, col. 12, lines 12-23*).

Okita fails to explicitly teach receiving a request for a modification to data associated with the process. However, Bacon discloses a workflow management system, method and medium that receives a modification to data associated with a process (*see claim 2*). It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to include the feature of to provide a way to receive a modification to data associated with a process for the reason of increasing the power of the decision making process of the processor by also being able to consider modified data in the system (*see claim 2*).

6. As to claim 3, Okita teaches wherein evaluating a condition and executing an action for at least one workflow step includes using a script engine which is invoked by the workflow engine (*col. 12, lines 12-23*);

7. As to claim 23, Okita teaches a computing method comprising:

- creating a data table in a server database (*col. 4, lines 64-67 through col. 5, lines 1-8, col 4, lines 54-64, Figure 2 and col. 5, lines 27-41*);
- creating a workflow table in the server database, wherein the workflow table is associated with the data table, wherein each row in the workflow table represents a workflow step (*col. 4, lines 64-67 through col. 5, lines 1-8, Col 4, lines 54-64, col. 12, lines 12-23*); a data modification request in the server database (*Figure 2 and col. 5, lines 27-41, col. 4, lines 64-67 through col. 5, lines 1-8*);
- invoking a workflow engine using server database triggers (*Col 4, lines 54-64, col. 12, lines 12-23, Figure 2 and col. 5, lines 27-41*);

- evaluating a condition and executing an action for each workflow step using a script engine which is invoked by the workflow engine (*Col 4, lines 54-64, col. 12, lines 12-23, col. 12, lines 25-37*).

Okita fails to explicitly teach receiving a modification to data associated with the process.

However, Bacon discloses a workflow management system, method and medium that receives a modification to data associated with a process (*see claim 2*). It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to include the feature of to provide a way to receive a modification to data associated with a process for the reason of increasing the power of the decision making process of the processor by also being able to consider modified data in the system (*see claim 2*).

8. As to claim 24, Okita teaches wherein invoking the workflow engine includes comparing the data modification request with a workflow definition in the workflow table and determining the appropriate workflow step to be executed (*col. 12, lines 12-23, col. 12, lines 25-37*).

9. As to claim 25, Okita teaches wherein evaluating a condition and executing an action for each workflow step includes checking execution permissions on each workflow step (*col. 12, lines 25-37*).

10. As to claim 26, Okita teaches wherein creating a workflow table defining a condition and an action for each workflow step using script functions (*col. 12, lines 12-23*). Okita fails to explicitly teach wherein each row in the workflow table represents a workflow step.

However, it is well known that each column or row of a table can be set to comprise a particular state or step. It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to include this feature to the existing system of Okita for the reason of increasing the ease for mapping or communicating by organizing the data efficiently.

11. As to claim 28, Okita teaches wherein evaluating a condition and executing an action for each workflow step includes committing the data modification request to the data table in the server database (*Col 4, lines 54-64, col. 12, lines 12-23, Figure 2 and col. 5, lines 27-41, col. 12, lines 12-23, col. 12, lines 25-37*).

12. **Claims 17, 19, and 20 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Okita et al. (hereinafter Okita) (US 6,225,998 B1) in view of Rosenthal et al. (hereinafter Rosenthal) (US 6,311,192 B1), and further in view of Hoffecker et al. (hereinafter Hoffecker) (US 5,325,505).**

13. As to claim 17, Okita teaches a workflow system comprising:

- a server database, wherein the system further includes a workflow triggers defined on the data table (*col. 4, lines 64-67 through col. 5, lines 1-8, Col 4, lines 54-64, col. 12, lines 12-23, Figure 2 and col. 5, lines 27-41, col. 10, lines 55-62*);
- a workflow extended store communicatively coupled to the server database (*col. 12, lines 12-23, Col 4, lines 54-64*);

- a script engine communicatively coupled to the workflow engine (*col. 12, lines 12-23, col. 11, lines 50-51*);

Okita fails to explicitly teach that the server database includes a data table and an associated workflow table. However, Rosenthal teaches a workflow engine initiating workflows from a table (scenario table) and also having it associated with a data table (scenario attributes table) (*see Abstract*). It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to include the feature of including a data table and an associated workflow table for the reason of increasing the control and management of the system by being able to associate a workflow with a proposed change (*see Abstract*).

Okita fails to explicitly teach having a workflow extended store coupled to the server database. However, Hoffecker teaches that it is common knowledge to one of ordinary skill in the art that “extended store is used for fast on line memory with data sets that are frequently read by the computer system” (*col. 1, lines 28-30*). Therefore, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to include this feature of an extended store coupled to the server database. The motivation for this combination is because “it is advantageous for computer system performance purposes to place the most frequently retrieved data sets in cache memory” and the most infrequently retrieved data sets in other mediums (*col. 1, lines 35-39*).

In addition, Okita fails to explicitly teach wherein each row in the workflow table comprises a workflow step. However, it is well known that each column or row of a table can be set to comprise a particular state or step. It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to include this feature to the existing system of Okita

in view of Hoffecker for the reason of increasing the ease for mapping or communicating by organizing the data efficiently.

14. As to claim 19, Hoffecker teaches:

- wherein the system further includes a session object communicatively coupled to the server database (*col. 29, lines 58-68*);
- wherein the session object comprises a set of properties for a workflow event, a set of data on the current user, a database user list, and a data set of user permission.

Hoffecker discloses that information from the database/server are created as objects for each data storage complex at each node, each subsystem, and each volume in each subsystem for which a record exists (*col. 25, lines 24-37*). In other words, Hoffecker teaches using objects to also represent a set of properties for a workflow event, a set of data on the current user, a database user list and a data set of user permission.

15. As to claim 20, Okita in view of Hoffecker teaches:

- wherein the system further includes a number of workflow support functions which operate in conjunction with the session object and implement a number of workflow tasks including sending email and finding a user's manager

It is inherent from the reference of Okita that there are workflow support functions that handle the "expression evaluation" and "condition step", for example, of the "workflow execution engine" (*col. 12, lines 12-23*). In addition, Hoffecker teaches using objects to represent a set of properties that can include sending email and finding a user's manager (*col. 25, lines 24-37*).

16. Claims 21 and 22 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Okita et al. (hereinafter Okita) (US 6,225,998 B1) in view of Rosenthal et al. (hereinafter Rosenthal) (US 6,311,192 B1), further in view of Hoffecker et al. (hereinafter Hoffecker) (US 5,325,505) and further in view of Flores et al. (hereinafter Flores) (US 6,073,109).

17. As to claim 21, the system of Okita teaches performing "timeouts" (*col. 16, line 64*) but Okita and Rosenthal and Hoffecker fail to teach wherein the timeout agent is implemented as a server job, wherein the timeout agent is scheduled to run with a definable frequency, and wherein the timeout agent scans the server database and executes a timeout workflow event when the database indicates such a timeout workflow event is due. However, Flores teaches wherein the system further includes a timeout agent implemented as a server job ("*col. 16, lines 37-67*"); wherein the timeout agent is scheduled to run with a definable frequency (*col. 16, lines 37-67*); wherein the timeout agent scans the server database and executes a timeout workflow event when the database indicates such an ontimeout workflow event is due (*col. 16, lines 37-67*). It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to include these features of a timeout agent for the reason of increasing the control of the system by utilizing task scheduling.

18. As to claim 22, Flores teaches wherein the timeout agent performs an update in the data table and triggers an association workflow action upon timeout workflow events which define a state transition (*col. 17, lines 5-10*).

19. **Claims 4-16 and 29-39 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Gabbita et al. (hereinafter Gabbita) (US 6,349,238 B1) in view of Du et al. (hereinafter Du) (US 6,078,982).**

20. As to claim 30, Gabbita teaches a workflow system (workflow management system that is flexible and can support future products without requiring significant modification and provides system security) (*col. 6, lines 12-17, col. 3, line 17*) comprising:

a workflow enabled data table (*col. 4, lines 56-64*);

a workflow table that includes workflow rules and associate code (*col. 21, lines 52-60*);

a workflow extended store coupled to the workflow enable data table, and the workflow table, the workflow extended store includes extended store procedures (*Fig. 1A, 1B and 6, col. 4, lines 56-64, col. 5, lines 20-48*);

a workflow engine (LSAT engine 121) coupled to the workflow enabled data table, the workflow table and the workflow extended store (*Fig. 1A, 1B and 6, col. 4, lines 56-64, col. 5, lines 20-48*); and

a script engine coupled to the workflow engine (*col. 4, lines 56-64, col. 5, lines 20-48, col. 21, lines 52-60*).

Gabbita fails to explicitly teach workflow triggers coupled to the data table and extended store. However, Du teaches using workflow triggers (arcs) coupled to the data table and extended store (database) based on rules or conditions (*col. 1, lines 43-60, col. 6, lines 8-46, Fig. 2*). It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to include the feature of workflow triggers coupled to the data table and extended store because it would increase the control of the system by knowing when to execute based on conditions or rules and then it passes process-relevant data when the rule/condition is satisfied (*col. 6, lines 8-18*).

21. As to claim 31, Gabbita teaches the workflow enabled data table and the workflow table are part of a database server (*col. 4, lines 56-64, col. 5, lines 20-48, col. 21, lines 52-60*).

22. As to claim 32, Du teaches the database server including a timeout agent implemented as a server job (*col. 6, lines 4-7*).

23. As to claim 33, Du teaches the timeout agent coupled to the workflow enabled data table and to the workflow engine (*col. 6, lines 4-7*).

24. As to claim 34, Du teaches the timeout agent scheduled to run with a definable frequency (*col. 6, lines 4-7*).

25. As to claim 35, Du teaches the timeout agent scans the database server and executes a timeout workflow event when the database server indicates such a workflow event is due (*col. 6, lines 1-7*).

26. As to claim 36, Gabbita teaches the workflow triggers analyze a data modification request submitted to the workflow enabled data table (*col. 11, line 23*).

27. As to claim 37, Gabbita teaches the workflow triggers invoke an extended store procedure (*col. 4, lines 56-64, col. 5, lines 20-48*).

28. As to claim 38, Gabbita teaches the workflow engine executes the workflow rules and associated code (*col. 21, lines 52-60*).

29. As to claim 39, Gabbita teaches the workflow engine invokes the script engine (*col. 4, lines 56-64, col. 5, lines 20-48, col. 21, lines 52-60*).

30. As to claim 4, it is rejected for the same reasons as stated in the rejection of claim 30 above. In addition, Gabbita teaches a server database (*See Fig. 1c*).

31. As to claim 5, Gabbita teaches wherein the workflow table is communicatively coupled to the workflow engine (*col. 4, lines 56-64 and col. 5, lines 20-48*).

32. As to claims 6 and 7, they are rejected for the same reasons as stated in the rejection of claim 4.

33. As to claim 8, Gabbita teaches wherein the workflow table comprises a set of workflow rules and associated code to be executed by the workflow engine, wherein a workflow table is defined for each data table that needs to enforce integrity of data changes (*col. 19, lines 41-47*).

34. As to claim 9, Gabbita teaches wherein the extended store comprises a data set having the necessary information to enforce a workflow step (*col. 4, lines 56-64 and col. 5, lines 20-48*).

35. As to claim 10, Gabbita teaches wherein the workflow engine receives information on a workflow event from the extended store and maps the information against a cached copy of the workflow table and executes an appropriate workflow step (*col. 13, lines 24-35*).

36. As to claim 11, it is rejected for the same reasons as stated in the rejection of claim 4 above.

37. As to claim 12, it is rejected for the same reasons as stated in the rejection of claim 11. In addition, Du teaches timeout events (*col. 6, lines 4-7*).

38. As to claim 13, Du teaches wherein a state event is associated with a single workflow state and is executed every time the event associated with the workflow state is triggered (*col. 6, lines 8-15*).

39. As to claim 14, Du teaches wherein the execution of a state event depends on how a workflow state is entered or exited (*col. 6, lines 4-7*).

40. As to claim 15, Gabbita teaches wherein a transition event is associated with a change from a current workflow state to a new workflow state, wherein the current and the new workflow states are defined by a transition workflow step, wherein the transition event is executed upon a requested state transition where the current and the new workflow state match the transition workflow step (*col. 4, lines 56-64, col. 5, lines 20-48, col. 21, lines 52-60*).

41. As to claim 16, Du teaches wherein a timeout event is associated with a timeout job, wherein the timeout event can be either a state event or a transition event, wherein the timeout event is triggered by the timeout job (*col. 6, lines 4-7*).

42. As to claim 29, it is rejected for the same reasons as stated in the rejection of claim 4. In addition, Gabbita teaches having a processor (*Fig. 6, item 604*) and a computer-readable medium (*Fig. 6, item 608*).

ARGUMENTS

43. *Applicant argues on pages 9-10 that Bacon does not teach the defect of Okita. Applicant states that Bacon apparently receives participant entered data comprising both the modified data as well as constructs on how the data is to be modified. This is in contrast to the claimed invention that receives modification to data, whereupon, based on the modification received, workflow steps are identified and the workflow engine subsequently invoked. The workflow steps that are identified subsequent to receipt of the modified data are distinct from the modified data.*

44. In response to applicant's argument that the references fail to show certain features of applicant's invention, it is noted that the features upon which applicant relies (i.e., workflow steps are identified and the workflow engine subsequently invoked) are not recited in the rejected claim(s). Although the claims are interpreted in light of the specification, limitations from the specification are not read into the claims. See *In re Van Geuns*, 988 F.2d 1181, 26 USPQ2d 1057 (Fed. Cir. 1993).

45. *Applicant argues on page 11 that Rosenthal is silent regarding a workflow extended store wherein analysis of data modification requests by workflow triggers invoke the extended store; and Hoffecker does not contemplate a workflow trigger that can invoked an extended store.*

46. In response to applicant's arguments against the references individually, one cannot show nonobviousness by attacking references individually where the rejections are based on combinations of references. See *In re Keller*, 642 F.2d 413, 208 USPQ 871 (CCPA 1981); *In re Merck & Co.*, 800 F.2d 1091, 231 USPQ 375 (Fed. Cir. 1986).

47. *Applicant states on page 11 that the Examiner acknowledges that Okita does not teach or suggest a workflow extended store communicatively coupled to the server database.*

48. In response, Examiner respectfully disagrees. The Examiner never acknowledged that. Instead, the Examiner acknowledged that system included an extended store (database) but Okita failed to explicitly teach that the database includes a data table and an associated workflow table within the database. The Examiner introduced Rosenthal merely to illustrate that it is well known and obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art that a database can include a data table and an associated workflow table.

Conclusion

Applicant's amendment necessitated the new ground(s) of rejection presented in this Office action. Accordingly, **THIS ACTION IS MADE FINAL**. See MPEP § 706.07(a). Applicant is reminded of the extension of time policy as set forth in 37 CFR 1.136(a).


A shortened statutory period for reply to this final action is set to expire **THREE MONTHS** from the mailing date of this action. In the event a first reply is filed within **TWO MONTHS** of the mailing date of this final action and the advisory action is not mailed until after the end of the **THREE-MONTH** shortened statutory period, then the shortened statutory period will expire on the date the advisory action is mailed, and any extension fee pursuant to 37 CFR 1.136(a) will be calculated from the mailing date of the advisory action. In no event, however, will the statutory period for reply expire later than **SIX MONTHS** from the date of this final action.

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Kenneth Tang whose telephone number is (703) 305-5334. The examiner can normally be reached on 8:30AM - 6:00PM, Every other Friday off.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Meng-Ai An can be reached on (703) 305-9678. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 703-872-9306.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free).

Kt
8/5/04


MENG-AL T. AN
SUPERVISORY PATENT EXAMINER
TECHNOLOGY CENTER 2100